

22 percent of the State's gross product, MEP has assisted 1,700 small and medium sized manufacturers to improve their productivity and profitability. One example is the Jor-Mac Company, a metal fabrication company in Grafton, WI, which was beset by fierce Chinese competitors. After working with MEP, Jor-Mac improved its production efficiency, increasing sales by \$5 million.

Since its inception in 1988, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership has been an invaluable resource to manufacturers. Without strong Federal support, MEP will be unable to maintain its mission of serving America's small manufacturers. At a time when we want to increase economic activity, expand U.S. exports, and strengthen the manufacturing base of our Nation, MEP is a fiscally sound investment of Federal resources.

#### RENEWABLE FUELS

Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, this week is the long-anticipated Energy Week over at the House of Representatives. It is the response of that Chamber's leadership to the soaring energy prices which are hurting this Nation's consumers, families, and businesses.

After hearing the House Energy Week touted for months, I was naturally curious about what would be on the agenda. A plan to put more alternative fuel vehicles on the road? Incentives to make renewable fuels available to more consumers? A plan to rein in the Federal Government's vast consumption of fossil energy?

No, Mr. President, none of those worthy initiatives are being discussed during House Energy Week. In fact, I am told that their only initiative is a plan to weaken a quarter-century ban on offshore drilling. That is it. That is evidently the House's plan to provide relief for Americans from the high cost of energy. Not the slightest mention of the role that renewable fuels might play in solving this energy crisis.

For most American families who drive passenger cars, ethanol is this country's most promising alternative to foreign oil. Ethanol is not merely an additive to gasoline, it is a replacement for gasoline, which is why major oil companies have sought to block its entry into the marketplace.

I have heard from gas station franchise owners in my State of Minnesota that the major oil companies have prevented them from selling E85 with a requirement that only branded products be sold under the company's branded canopy. This means that, rather than selling E85 from one of several existing pumps, a station owner must dig a new hole in the ground somewhere in the parking lot, and install a new pump, often at costs of up to \$75,000.

Perhaps this explains why, of the estimated 170,000 service stations in the country, just 800, or less than 5 percent, offer E85 fuel. And of those 800 stations, over one-fourth, or 210 sta-

tions, are located in my State of Minnesota.

I have introduced legislation, the Renewable Fuels Promotion Act, that would prohibit oil companies from restricting where E85 and biodiesel can be sold on the premises of franchised gas stations.

E85 is a very popular fuel, where it is available. This year, first quarter sales in Minnesota increased 320 percent over last year, as the price of gas soared. Americans all over the country should have access to E85, and my bill would ensure that every gas station owner who wants to sell it has the ability to do so.

My legislation also targets the Federal Government's failure to embrace renewable fuels. In his State of the Union address, the President said our Nation is addicted to oil. What he failed to mention was that the Federal Government is the biggest addict of them all. The Federal Government is far and away the largest consumer of energy in the United States. In fact, the Department of Defense alone is the single largest consumer of petroleum fuel in the world. So what would happen if the largest consumer in the most energy-hungry nation in the world used its tremendous market power to purchase renewable fuels?

Consider this: In 2004, the Federal Government consumed 2 billion gallons of petroleum diesel fuel. If every gallon of that diesel had been a blend of 20 percent biodiesel and 80 percent diesel fuel, the Government would have consumed 400 million gallons of biodiesel—a great boost for the nascent industry. Instead, the Federal Government is using its massive purchasing power to buy petroleum fuel—a windfall for the oil companies. In 2004, the Federal purchases of ethanol and biodiesel fuels combined amounted to a paltry 3 million gallons, less than two-tenths of 1 percent of the total fuel consumption.

According to the Department of Energy, "One reason for the relatively low alternative fuel use rate is the lack of sufficient alternative fuel infrastructure." "The Renewable Fuels Promotion Act" would require every Federal fueling station to be equipped with a renewable fuels pump. On May 17, I sent a letter to President Bush asking him to accomplish the same thing with an Executive order.

In the world of renewable fuels, infrastructure is half the battle. If you don't have the pumps, you can't sell the fuel. My bill addresses the fundamental problem underlying the Federal Government's failure to embrace biofuels: the fuels are not available at Federal fueling stations. In Congress, we can't control the private energy markets, but we do have some sway over the Federal Government. My bill would ensure that the tremendous purchasing power of the Federal Government would take us in the right direction: toward a stronger biofuels industry, and away from reliance on foreign oil.

In conclusion, I wish our House colleagues the best as they proceed with their Energy Week agenda. However, I would caution them that a plan to drill offshore is not really a plan for relief from high energy prices. Even if legislation were passed today, no new oil would come online for a decade or more. Americans don't have a decade to wait.

Ethanol and biodiesel are here today. They are ready for consumers, and automakers are ready with the vehicles. The Renewable Fuels Promotions Act would help bring biofuels to the customers that need energy security today.

#### INTERNATIONAL POLAR YEAR

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise to take this time to speak about the Arctic and the upcoming International Polar Year. The Arctic is still a new frontier for many in Congress. For many, it is too far away, too dark and too cold to merit much attention. But whether you represent Florida, Iowa, or any other State, Americans around the country are connected to events in the Arctic. From climate change and the development of our natural resources, to international treaties and maritime rights, more knowledge about each of these issues is needed to help us formulate and shape the policies that will impact the Arctic and our country for future generations.

It has been nearly 14 years since the United States last developed an Arctic policy. The world was a different place 14 years ago. The Cold War had just ended. Climate change was barely being considered as an issue. An accessible, navigable Arctic Ocean was nowhere near as real a prospect as it is today. The Arctic Council, an intergovernmental organization that addresses many of the common concerns and challenges faced by the Arctic states, was just getting started. And we had nowhere near the sensitivity to the changes life is bringing to indigenous residents of the Arctic.

Times have changed, and we need a new Arctic policy. The upcoming International Polar Year will be the 50th anniversary of the International Geophysical Year of 1957–1958 and continues a tradition of international science years that began in 1882–1883 and again in 1932–1933.

The purpose of the International Polar Year is to spark an interest in those whose expertise may not be in the Polar Regions. Most importantly, the theme is international.

IPY is being led by the International Council for Science, ICSU, and the World Meteorological Organization, WMO. Participating nations so far include Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Chile, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greenland, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain,